SHAKER COLLECTION

Item 243

"Sketch of Socialistic Experiments"
by Sister Jane D. Knight (Union
Village, Ohio) ?1856

Sketch of Sociabstic Experiments

by

Sister Jane D. Knight

About the year 24-5 Robert Owen visited and lectured in Philad[a], finding there many minds that were ready to hear and receive the ideas the ideas he advanced on social and communistic life,- Abel Knight was one that heard gladly the theories that would in their estimation be of great utility to all grades of people - Mountains levelled and vallies raised. Those that were more fortunate than their neighbours would be rationally devoting their wealth of earthly or mental posepsions for the weal of others, and at the same time be largely augmenting the beauty and perpetuity of domestic conditions - with combined strength and interest they argued could be effected much towards an earthly Eden than could be wrought in the private selfish system that so universally prevailed - while the benefits accruing to the class that had been considered as the dependent operatives

were certainly great - the mechanic and artisan would be no longer necessitated to toil with unjust remuneration - often suffering for the comforts of life, when the heartless employers and consumers were rolling in luxuries that generally the hands of the working man or Woman had wrought for the non-producer. - The generous spirit of Robert Owen expressed on a Chart the new plan or Order by him suggested - while wonder and admiration filled the spirits of the many weary and restless souls as they gazed upon this utopian picture, but the material to effect this desideratum was not to be found - truly there were many earnest philanthropic men in this enterprise - - learned professors as Wm. McClure and Rafinesque with others of talents & ability were ready to act as Pestilozzian teachers - James Jones and many humanitarian souls eager to give wealth and practical aid - - many of organizing, systematic abilities that were ready to act in this social and equalizing

movement, had there been conditions that would effect the work - but there was the mistake - and like the New Harmony attempted a short time before in Indiana, so did the effort for the Valley Forge community prove as short lived! and great the disappointment and depression that followed:

- Yet the idea lived - at various times the experiment has been acted upon - always attended with similar results - About the years 1845, Believers were apprised of the attempt of community life in Mass, a place designated Brook farm, I think under the auspices of Dana - McDaniels, Ripley and other similar workers - these professed to be rather of an exclusive class, the higher, intellectual were here to congregate and daily have a feast of reason and flow of soul - but without muscular action the Machinery worked not - interest in the Observatory and lecture room waned as the Granary and Storehouse lacked supplies

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and like a meteor the gathering vanished
— Again in this vicinity was a preliminary
movement — the Hopedale Organization
sustained in spirit chiefly by the benevolent
Adin Ballou — he too saw with the eye of
a prophetic Metaphysician that harmony
of action would procure order & happiness
to those that were desirous of a more ra-
tional life — but Adin too lacked the
cementing material that would make
firm the structure however polished
and fair might be the Stones that had
been selected from earth's quarries —
— In 1856 Wm Fish one of its sanguine
supporters writes thus — "We are now
indeed more individualized, less organi-
cally social than heretofore — tho' our
object and interest is the same — the con-
struction of an Order of Society in which
a Divine Spirit and Divine Principles
should rule — and Love, Harmony and
prosperity for ... — thus is expressed the
desire
& good intent — but seeds of disintegration

were rife, and hopeless was Hopedale:
— The Phalanx in New Jersey now attracted much interest and confidence, able philanthrophists were there — also political philosophers with Horace Greely at their head, all sanguine in their expectations of success, as they very confidently endorsed and aided this apparently well laid social structure: In N. Family was visited by Charles Sears, perhaps one of the most practical and disinterested of its members — he was a genial and humane spirit — willing to sacrifice much for improvement in society — and now to witness the despondency — the saddened visage was truly affecting — but the Iron and the clay could not cocalesce — and the image would fall:
In the Spring of 1856 returning from a visit at Chester County Pa Elder Frederick & Co, met with Marcus Spring a late associate of the Phalanx, he was very buoyant in spirit — having abundant means, and in his estimation experience and wisdom to warrant

other arrangements with superior skill in laying the basis of yet another Phalanx or Phoenix - he was now going to accomplish something - but where the Elysium is we have never heard!

In 1845 N. F. was visited by J. Collins the Principal of the Skeneateles Community, he was one of fine culture, and a warm humanitarian - but the sequel declares not adequate to effect his ideal of Society - but as we were informed by those that were attracted, the aggregate at Skeneateles was of too heterogeneous a character to co-operate but for a very brief season - and its members glad to be released from confusion more confounded - and again adrift on the Sea were might instead of right is ever at work - where the self prevails, and not self-denial!

Spiritualists have made several attempts at communistic life - T. L. Harris by some Spirit direction projected a community in

the vicinity of Yellow Springs Va, - but so much did it differ from the "Starry heavens" and so dimly illuminated, like the morning mist soon dispelled:

In J. M. Spear and J. Travis visited N. Y. - They were sure to gather the people that were of one mind - but such failed to appear - and the few that went to practice life found that they too had listened to the trumpet that gave an uncertain sound and they could not do better than again occupy the individualized tent:

In 1850, Josiah Warren, and some other active minds went forward in the work of Modern times or Desorollo on Long Island - having the idea that there would be the congregating of those that were favorable to individual sovereignty, urging that in full freedom and independence of action would be found the Spring that would arrest all vexatious currents - and peace and plenty might come, and ultimately the Desire of all

nations might be the consolation - but alas a motley scene of divers colors was there - but the agitation for the right will never be lost, and the workers for humanity will in due time see the beacon that will give them the assurance that the Deliverer hath come - and the Heavenly City of eternal foundations has descended from on high:

1850, Elder Frederick has a correspondent of the name of A. Longly an earnest projector of an attempted organization in Ohio - - this also was to be on the independent idea - - in hopes that thus would be evolved from the human mind the ingredient or element that would seek another's weal - but followed by the inevitable result disappointment, - - In 1871, 2, friend Longly appears again - - now sees the mistake - now is going to be established a rigid routine in the government of the New Commune about to be inaugurated - Officers are to be empowered to act without consulting or being dictated too by any member

- They have now an ideal machinery - and conceive (however adverse to their previous theory) that positive authority must be on the Officials, or the continual friction of the selfish and inexperienced conditions would be ever retarding its progress -
- albeit their wells afford not the lubricating material - and sad noises, gratings - and gnashings would be - no centripetal or organizing power there demonstrated - and yet was the cry from the many - oft heard - "Is it come" - the desired Elixir for human woes was yet striven for:
- In the Fall of year 72 Dr, Haskell visited North Family - and stated that this new plan was also a failure! no where was seen the wished for results - Dr H. has been a leading mind in the co-operative views - went to Ancora, N. Jersey some 6 or 10 years since - many settled in that vicinity having in view some preliminary movement towards harmony of life and action -

thinking to form a nucleus unto which minds could gather that were of old errors and institutions — truly some of the better sort did there strive to effect a more congenial home — but there came also the World with all its deformities and enormities, and to-day the aged veteran thus expresses himself — I shall look more into Shakerism than I have done — all has failed me thro' life in which I thought to realize happiness for myself and fellow beings — Short lived are the engagements and continual the vexations in all the phases of Society in which he had taken a part:

These circumstances I have noticed and recorded on my memory during my sojourn thro' life and the conclusions that have followed may be more elaborately expressed in the future — they doubtless are well understood by the Believer — the investigator into the